

Ailish Hopper / Excerpt from book of poetry, *Dark~Sky Society* (New Issues Press, 2015)

### Self-Portrait as Smoke

From a broken storefront window, smoke  
canopies two young men

who kick another's caved-in body  
[helicopter circles]

then raise and drop a block, concrete  
on his head

While men, then women, step past, *to*  
*rectify*, by emptying  
store shelves

I see this on *camera*, Latin for *box*  
or *room*; in this case, some white

people's living room. *Terrible*,  
I say, & change  
the subject, as if my body were  
diffused  
[leaves wind]

dispersed, ribboning

while a man is dragged  
from bed  
[curtains parted]

windpipe crushed  
collar stained, hands jerk  
and stray

While men, then women, tear from his pants  
[damp night]

their souvenirs, *to*  
*preserve*  
The flash-  
bulb pops; the splash

kerosene  
[door behind]

and then the flint  
the arcing match---

flame

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First appeared in *Copper Nickel*, Winter 2011-2012.

## View of the Capitol from St. Elizabeth's

Space is nearer. —Robert Lowell

Dream city      I climb

        an eyelid's  
molten curve  
drop into a mouth, cavernous

burnished aluminum  
teeth, pressed

to the small of my back. However cold  
the *skin*

it is a thrill

to touch  
Man, Awakening

while we scale his face  
and hands

Capitol city      We'll  
        vaporize  
if the bomb comes

say the grainy films  
radiant

with *aftermaths*  
Implicit

handed down

like the length and shape  
of fingers

color of my eyes

City of windows      Rhetorical  
        cemented-in

the view  
from St. Elizabeth's, where my dad fills  
notebooks

Blue ballpoint  
slanted shapes

whose meanings  
have all

peeled away

*Dw dr*

*Dw dr*

he says, eyebrows raised

Another thread  
I hold, not knowing

what it leads to

City of memorials      Mute  
white façades

granite, pantomiming  
loss

After the bomb, they'll all  
vanish. Gone

Lincoln's  
marble hands

that drape

colossal armrests. Missing  
chiseled wave of hair

laid across

his forehead  
*We*  
*cannot hallow*

*this ground*  
the new  
absence

might, like Lincoln  
say

Or, perhaps

*Begin*  
*again*

## Emancipation Test #672

Instructions: *Please draw 'slavery'*

(Facilitator: first remove all slavery from the room)

Score of 4 Drawing of person. Crowds Brown Legs And Head Around Tiny Torso. In Chains

3 Caucasian Monster. Legs Float in Space, Arms Not Obviously Connected.  
Head is Not Present

2 Drawing Reveals Some Indication of Tree Being Received. A Rope

Score of 1 Blue or Green Lines Totally Distorted. Encroached by noise

SCORE

\_\_\_\_\_Almost the same hardly any better at all a little somewhat slow better

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First appeared in *Tidal Basin Review*, Fall 2010. "Emancipation Test #672" riffs on the Clock Drawing Test for dementia, in particular the scoring described in Sunderland et al., 1983.

## On Being Crazy

It's immoral to steal, but you can take things.—Anton Chekhov

I can't tell you, you have to see  
If tender enough, any touch  
will bruise  
*Now, never think anymore of your place of origin*  
Beneath "I love," a weight  
bleeds through  
I'm not supposed to be angry  
*It's your own choice*  
Enveloped, body and breath  
So that the very veins, like tiniest roots, capillaries  
The center of this, unrecognizable  
They took her, tied a rope around her neck

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First appeared in *American Letters & Commentary*, Fall 2011. "On Being Crazy" borrows a title from Du Bois's essay (1923); italicized lines are from Hugh Thomas, *Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440-1870* (1997): "Never think anymore of your place of origin. Do not eat dogs, nor rats, nor horses. Be content." Chekhov epigraph is from "Out Beggary."

## Emancipation Test #54

Instructions: *Tell the doctor what you see  
in the letters below*

H K W H I T E G L B  
S Q B L A C K V S N  
Z C B L A C K M R D  
E L W H I T E N O Q  
I D W H I T E L G F  
X T B L A C K S L Y  
B N B L A C K E R U  
H E W H I T E D F A  
W T B L A C K E L H  
J U B L A C K P U O

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First appeared in *Tidal Basin Review*, Fall 2010.



## The Good Caucasian

[It's] the ghost in me coming out. ---Lee 'Scratch' Perry

When forty acres have besieged  
my brow, and a mule

and a winter, cold  
as Ice Cube, I try

a remembrance of things, floating past---  
Miss Daisy, and her necklace

of fingerpointing      Title pages  
*On the South*    now squares of ash

centers embering  
If memory be a mountaintop

mine is hidden

by fat, puffy clouds, and other  
symptoms. But, when dis-raced

in men's eyes, and by time---  
dust, the centuries---I will admit

impediment. My body  
is where we are held

My eyes  
have drawn

your shape  
and you mine. Not

*I Have a dream*

A cold, cold feeling

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First appeared in *Harvard Review Online*, Aug 2014.